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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

"ST. ANTHONY'S BREAD."

LESS than three years ago there was founded, in the back room of a small store on a side street in Toulon, a charitable project which bids fair to do more towards bringing about the solution of the social problem in France than all the congresses and conferences that have been held, and all the books and articles that have been written with that end in view. It is rapidly assuming the proportions of an international economic movement of the first magnitude.

This charity, which has become an object at once of the astonishment and admiration of all Europe, is named "St. Anthony's Bread," after St. Anthony of Padua, and it is by the voluntary contributions of his clients that it is maintained.

"St. Anthony's Bread" comprises not only food, but also clothing and medical attendance—everything, in fact, necessary for the relief of the poor in general, and of the sick and afflicted poor in particular; for its directors wisely hold that with this class one should always "make the good God visible." They ascertain the names of the laborers in the various parishes who are out of employment and help them to procure work, quite irrespective of their religious belief, or want of religious belief. Orphans are sent to school, the aged, the blind, the deaf and dumb are all placed in special establishments; letters are written for those who are themselves unable to write, and advice procured from either doctor or lawyer when needed. While the deserving poor are thus sought out and all their wants supplied, professional beggars are tracked and exposed.

The promoters of this charity, however, do not labor merely to solve the Social Problem, important though that work undoubtedly is. The corporal necessities of the poor are relieved through the medium of "St. Anthony's Bread" only on the understanding that their spiritual duties are not neglected. The conditions imposed upon the workmen in this regard are of the lightest possible character. For example, one of the publications issued under the auspices of "St. Anthony's Bread" consists wholly of light literature, except for one brief paragraph of religious matter at the end of the last page. "We must give them the *feuilleton* or they would not read the instruction," it is explained. In friendly conferences, held at stated intervals, the same *clientèle* is taught the lesson of mutual help and sympathy.

The writer recently had an opportunity of witnessing the practical working of this charitable project in the "toughest" quarters of Paris, and has also discussed its various phases with Frenchmen of every shade of belief, all

of whom with one accord acclaim its promoters as the nation's benefactors. Indeed, it will be surprising if "St. Anthony's Bread" does not result in the complete regeneration of the French working classes—and if of these, why not of the working classes of all Europe and beyond? For the scope of "St. Anthony's Bread" is no longer confined to France. As, at the start, it spread from town to town throughout France, so is it now spreading from country to country throughout the world. It is interesting to learn that this great work is to be introduced into the United States during the coming winter. The result will be watched with interest.

As is well known, the literature of the social question is immense, and is growing rapidly every day. Herr Stamhammer, in his *Bibliographie des Socialismus*, enumerates some five thousand works more or less immediately dealing with it, and the catalogue is by no means complete. Words! There were storms of words on this same subject long before the French Revolution. Theories are very well; we may combat Mr. George and quote passages from Albertus Magnus down to Leo Taxil, but in this century, mere theorizing never brought about any reform. Action is the true policy, and no steps that could be taken in this direction are more thoroughly practical than those adopted by the founders of "St. Anthony's Bread."

"St. Anthony's Bread" is based upon the divine principle of charity. And such Christian charities as this, which has for its aim the care of the poor *without distinction as to race or creed*, not only provide a sovereign balm for all the carking cares of the unfortunate, but have also the happy effect of eliminating acrimony from the minds of men.

CHARLES ROBINSON.

THEN AND NOW.

NO DOUBT there were splendid specimens of humanity, both physically and intellectually, among the ancients. The Venus of Milo, the Apollo Belvidere, the Farnese Hercules were not evolved from the unassisted imagination. Even if they were so evolved, they who conceived such glorious ideals would themselves have represented a high type of mankind. The *Iliad* and the *Ædipus Tyrannus* are incontrovertible facts. Even among the earliest prehistoric races there must have been men of wonderful genius and energy. The man who kindled the first fire and broiled the first steak was the peer of any modern discoverer, and he who first smelted iron ore was the intellectual equal of Edison himself. The prehistoric discoverer of the Ecliptic was not surpassed in astronomical achievement even by him who ages afterwards formulated the Nebular Hypothesis, or by him who chemically analyzed the stars. Some of us moderns are disposed to magnify unduly the triumphs of our day in comparison with those of former ages, forgetting that they who built the lower stories of the vast temple of human achievement are as worthy of praise as they who raised it to loftier heights. It is still far below its destined entablature; but even those whose privilege it shall be to place upon it its architectural crown in the sunlight of the upper air, will deserve no better of their race than those who laid its foundations in the darkness of the past.

Others are equally disposed to glorify unduly the past in comparison with the present. To them there have been no poets since Homer and Virgil, no orators since Demosthenes and Cicero, no philosophers since Socrates and Plato, no commanders since Alexander and Hannibal, no artists since Phidias and Apelles. To them only the dead languages are the fitting vehicles of